

REMARKS

Claims 1, 3-15, 17-29, 31, 33, and 38-40 are pending. New claims 38-40 have been added. Claims 1, 3, 9, 18 and 25 are amended herein.

Applicants note with appreciation the personal interview conducted between Michael Blankstein of WMS Gaming, the undersigned, Examiner Matthew Hoel and Examiner Bob Pezzuto on April 25, 2007. Pursuant to the discussions in the interview, the Applicants have amended independent claims 1, 9, 18 and 25 to clarify the claims. The Applicants agree with the Examiners that the rejections premised upon the '581 reference are overcome by the present amendments and that newly cited references of Walker (2005/0221885) and Olsen (USP 6,210,275), which were not previously of record, do not anticipate the present claims and that combination thereof was not suggested.

1. THE 35 U.S.C. § 102 REJECTION

Claims 1, 4, 5, 7, 9 to 12, 14, 18 to 20, 22, 24 to 28, and 31 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Yoseloff et al. (U.S. Patent 6,464,581 B1)(hereinafter "**Yoseloff**").

Claim 1 recites a slot machine comprising a plurality of reels, each of the reels comprising a reel strip bearing a plurality of different first discrete symbols and a continuous graphical element extending between adjacent ones of the discrete first symbols such that the first discrete symbols are thematically unified by the graphical element. A processor is operable to rotate the reels and stop the reels to place the first discrete symbols on the reels in visual association with a display area, and to award a base game payout responsive to an alignment of a plurality of first discrete symbols associated with a winning combination along a selected payline. At least one of said reels comprises a video reel and wherein said processor is operable

to, for said at least one of said reels, move a selected second discrete symbol relative to said continuous graphical element and determine an award, said award being related to a degree of said movement and being independent of any payline.

Claim 9 recites a slot machine comprising a plurality of reels, each of the reels comprising a reel strip bearing a plurality of discrete symbol positions and a continuous graphical element extending between adjacent ones of the discrete symbol positions such that the discrete symbol positions are thematically unified by the graphical element, each of the reel strips also bearing a plurality of different first discrete symbols, a discrete first symbol being associated with each of said discrete symbol positions. Claim 9 also includes a processor programmed to award a base game payout responsive to an alignment of a plurality of different first discrete symbols associated with a winning combination along a selected payline. At least one of said reels comprises a video reel and wherein said processor is programmed to, for said at least one of said reels, move a selected second discrete symbol relative to said continuous graphical element during a bonus game, an award being related to a degree of said movement and independent of any payline.

Claim 18 recites a method of conducting a slot game on a slot machine controlled by a processor, comprising the acts of receiving a wager from a player and rotating a plurality of reels, at least one of the reels comprising a video reel, each of the reels comprising a reel strip bearing a plurality of different first discrete symbols and a continuous graphical element extending between adjacent ones of the first discrete symbols such that the first discrete symbols are thematically unified by the graphical element. The method of claim 18 also includes the acts of stopping the reels to place a portion of each reel in visual association with a display area, providing a payout responsive to an alignment of a winning combination of first discrete symbols along a payline in said display area, moving a selected second discrete symbol relative to said

continuous graphical element, and providing an award related to a degree of said movement and being independent of any payline.

Claim 25 also recites a method of conducting a slot game on a slot machine controlled by a processor, comprising the acts of receiving a wager from a player and of rotating a video reel, the video reel bearing a plurality of discrete symbol positions and a continuous graphical element extending between adjacent ones of the discrete symbol positions such that the discrete symbol positions are thematically unified by the graphical element. Claim 25 also includes the acts of moving a discrete symbol between the adjacent ones of the discrete symbol positions as the video reel is rotated and determining a payout based on a degree of movement of the discrete symbol between the adjacent ones of the discrete symbol positions as the video reel is rotated, said act of determining being independent of any selected pay line.

Reconsideration and withdrawal of this 35 U.S.C. § 102 rejection is requested in view of the clarifying amendments presented herein and in view of the Examiner's acknowledgement that the present amendments overcome this rejection.

2. THE 35 U.S.C. § 103 REJECTIONS

Claims 3 and 16 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over **Yoseloff** (U.S. 6,464,581 B1).

Claims 6, 13, 21, and 29 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over **Yoseloff** (U.S. 6,464,581 B1).

Claims 8, 15, and 23 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over **Yoseloff** (U.S. 6,464,581 B1).

Claims 17 and 33 were rejected under 35 U.S. C 103(a) as being unpatentable over **Yoseloff** (U.S. 6,464,581 B1) in view of **Kojima** (U.S. Patent 5,265,889 A1).

Reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection of these 35 U.S.C. § 103 rejections is requested in view of the clarifying amendments presented herein and in view of the Examiner's acknowledgement that the present amendments overcome these rejections.


3. CONCLUSION

The Applicant believes the claims are in condition for allowance, and action towards that end is earnestly solicited.

If any matters may be resolved or clarified through a telephone interview, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the Applicants' undersigned attorney at the number shown. No fees are believed due in connection with this amendment. The Commissioner is, however, authorized to deduct any necessary fees (except for payment of the issue fee), from Nixon Peabody LLP Deposit Account No. 50-4181, Order No. 247079-000119USPT.

Respectfully submitted,

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